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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH CIVIL AVIATION MINISTER

1. On June 23, Ambassador Thomas met with Minister of Civil Aviation Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin. He was accompanied by EconOff as notetaker. They discussed Bangladesh's commitment to aviation security and compliance with the Chicago Convention; and progress in BDG's purchase of four Boeing 777s.

2. The Minister affirmed BDG's commitment to security in Bangladesh airports and in Biman's operations. The Minister presented the latest FAA evaluation document that gave a "satisfactory" rating on BDG's compliance with the Chicago Convention and FAA requirements. He stated that BDG's Civil Aviation Authority and Biman Bangladesh is in compliance with international and U.S. standards. He reiterated his commitment to security and to the war against terrorism.

3. Minister Nasiruddin said that Biman is committed to improving its fleet. The deal to purchase four Boeing 777 jets for long-haul and six Airbuses for shorter routes is in the final stages, with the contract under review in the Purchase Committee. He said that he expects to meet with the finance minister soon to discuss issuance of sovereign guarantee. Ambassador welcomed the progress on the purchase agreement. On the issue of financing, he assured the Minister that financing for such a deal is possible and that EXIM Bank and Citigroup will work with the BDG on this. He told the Minister that BDG will get the same financing deal as Pakistan. He also encouraged the Minister to move forward on becoming a signatory to the Capetown Protocol. He said that BDG would be able to get even lower rates if and when they sign the Capetown Protocol.

4. Ambassador Thomas emphasized that it is essential that BDG continue to remain vigilant regarding FAA regulations to prevent terrorism and eliminate safety problems. The Minister took the point.

THOMAS